



# Tallinn

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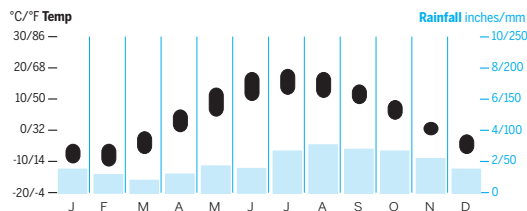
## Why Go?

These are heady days for Estonia. In only one generation this diminutive country has shaken off the dead weight of the Soviet era and turned its focus to the West, and to promises of a richer, shinier future. It's clearly taking its cues from its Nordic neighbours, especially Finland – a country with which it shares strong linguistic and cultural ties. A Tallinn visit from Helsinki is just too easy to overlook – ferries ply the 85km separating the two capitals so frequently that Finns almost think of Tallinn as a distant suburb.

And what a 'suburb'! Tallinn fuses Eastern European and Nordic moods, medieval and modern architecture, cobblestoned and cosmopolitan charms. It's an intoxicating mix of Gothic church spires, glass-and-chrome skyscrapers, wine cellars inside 15th-century basements, beer terraces on sun-filled Raekoja plats and bike paths to beaches and forests – with a few Soviet throwbacks in the mix, for added spice.

## When to Go

### Tallinn



**Apr & May** See the country shake off winter's gloom.

**Jun-Aug** White nights, beach parties and loads of summer festivals.

**Dec** Christmas markets, mulled wine and long cosy nights.

## Sights

The medieval **Old Town**, just south of Tallinn Bay, comprises Toompea (the upper town) and the lower town, still surrounded by much of its 2.5km defensive wall. Its centre is Raekoja plats (Town Hall Square). Immediately east of Old Town is the modern city centre.

### Raekoja plats

TOWN SQUARE

Raekoja plats has been the heart of Tallinn life since the 11th century; bathed in sunlight or sprinkled with snow, it's always a photogenic spot. It's dominated by northern Europe's only surviving Gothic **town hall** ([www.tallinn.ee/raekoda](http://www.tallinn.ee/raekoda); Raekoja plats; adult/student €4/2; ☉10am-4pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug), built between 1371 and 1404. Climb the **tower** (adult/student €3/1; ☉11am-6pm May-mid-Sep) for fine Old Town views.

The nearby **Town Council Pharmacy** (Raeapteek; Raekoja plats 11) is another ancient Tallinn institution; there's been a pharmacy or apothecary here since 1422. An arch beside it leads into narrow Saiakang (White Bread Passage), at the far end of which is the striking 14th-century Gothic **Holy Spirit Church** (adult/concession €1/0.50; ☉9am-5pm Mon-Sat May-Sep, 10am-3pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr).

### Lower Old Town

HISTORIC NEIGHBOURHOOD

From the Holy Spirit Church, stroll along **Pikk** (Long Street), which runs north to the **Great Coast Gate** – the medieval exit to Tallinn's port. Pikk is lined with the 15th-

## GOODBYE KROON, HELLO EURO

On 1 January 2011, Estonia bid a fond farewell to its national currency, the kroon (EEK; introduced in 1992 to replace the Soviet rouble). The official currency of Estonia is now the euro.

Prices in this chapter were re-searched when the kroon was still in place, and have been converted at the official exchange rate (€1 = EEK15.65). Visitors to Estonia should expect some changes to listed prices as the euro settles in.

century houses of merchants and gentry (check out the fabulous facade of the gallery at No 18).

At the northern end of Pikk stands a chief Tallinn landmark, the gargantuan **St Olaf's Church** (entry at Lai 50). View-seekers unafraid of a bit of sweat should head up to the **observation tower** (adult/student €2/1; ☉10am-6pm Apr-Oct). Just south of the church is the **former KGB headquarters** (Pikk 59), whose basement windows were sealed to conceal the sounds of cruel interrogations.

A medieval merchant's home houses the **City Museum** ([www.linnamuuseum.ee](http://www.linnamuuseum.ee); Vene 17; adult/student €3.20/1.90; ☉10.30am-5 or 6pm Wed-Mon), which traces Tallinn's development from its beginnings through to 1940 with some quirky displays and curious artefacts.

The street of **Vene** is home to some photogenic passageways and courtyards – check out **Katariina käik** (Vene 12), housing artisans' studios, and **Master's Courtyard** (Vene 6), a cobblestoned charmer, some of it dating from the 13th century. It's full of craft stores and a sweet cafe-chocolaterie.

The majestic St Nicholas' Church (Niguliste Kirik), now known as the **Niguliste Museum** ([www.ekm.ee](http://www.ekm.ee); Niguliste 3; adult/student €3.20/1.90; ☉10am-5pm Wed-Sun), stages concerts and serves as a museum of medieval church art.

### Toompea

HISTORIC NEIGHBOURHOOD

A regal approach to Toompea is through the red-roofed 1380 **gate tower** at the western end of Pikk in the lower town, and then uphill along Pikk jalg (Long Leg). Alternatively, a winding stairway connects Lühike jalg (Short Leg), off Rataskaevu, to Toompea.

## NEED TO KNOW

### At a Glance

- » **Population** 412,000
- » **Country code** ☑372; no area code for Tallinn
- » **Language** Estonian
- » **Currency** euro

### Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.73
Canada	C\$1	€0.71
Japan	¥100	€0.83
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.54
UK	UK£1	€1.12
USA	US\$1	€0.67